

IN THE CLAIMS

1. **(currently amended)** A method for managing fees of contents in which the fees arise based on a predetermined charging rule upon distributing the contents, said method comprising the steps of:

equipping information gathering means on a network with which a user terminal is allowed to connect, said user terminal carrying out information processing by utilizing said contents;

embedding ~~digital information~~middleware, which gives a predetermined function to the user terminal, to said contents, said ~~digital information~~middleware itself including one or more programs providing functionality provided to said user terminal to autonomously monitor, and store, a contents utilizing history at the user terminal, and transmit the stored contents utilizing history along with identification information to said information gathering means at a predetermined timing while said user terminal is connected with said network;

processing a plurality of said contents, in each of which the ~~digital information~~middleware is embedded, to one archive data;

selectively encrypting said archive data and adding an attribute data to the encrypted archive data;

distributing said archive data and attribute data through a predetermined distribution mechanism;

holding, by predetermined identification information holding means, identification information for identifying said distributed contents and said distribution mechanism;

counting a distribution condition of contents per distribution mechanism based on said contents utilizing history gathered through said information gathering means and said identification information held by said identification information holding means; and

determining a charging amount per distribution mechanism based on said counted distribution condition and a charging rule for said contents, wherein the contents utilizing history is stored permanently as long as the contents is utilized, and

the attribute data indicates one or more of a genre of corresponding content, a type of corresponding content, a distribution mode of corresponding content, and a condition of transaction of corresponding content, excluding rights and fee information for the corresponding content.

2. **(currently amended)** A method for managing fees of contents in which the fees arise based on a predetermined charging rule upon utilizing the contents, said method comprising the steps of:

issuing a recording medium to a user operating a user terminal which carries out information processing by utilizing said contents, said recording medium having a data recording area in which user identification data is recorded and a nonvolatile memory area;

equipping information gathering means on a network with which said user terminal with said recording medium being loaded is allowed to connect;

embedding digital information middleware, which gives a predetermined function to the user terminal, to said contents, said digital information middleware itself including one or more programs providing functionality provided to said user terminal to autonomously monitor, and store to said memory area, a contents utilizing history indicating utilizing condition of the contents at the user terminal, and read said stored contents utilizing history so as to transmit said contents utilizing history to said information gathering means along with said user identification data at a predetermined timing while said user terminal is connected with said network;

processing a plurality of said contents, in each of which the ~~digital~~
~~information~~middleware is embedded, to one archive data;

selectively encrypting said archive data and adding an attribute data to the encrypted
archive data;

distributing said archive data and attribute data through a predetermined distribution
mechanism;

counting a utilization condition of the contents per user based on the contents utilizing
history and the user identification data gathered through said information gathering means;
and

determining a charging amount per user based on said counted utilization condition
and a charging rule for said contents,

wherein the contents utilizing history is stored permanently as long as the contents is
utilized, and

the attribute data indicates one or more of a genre of corresponding content, a type of
corresponding content, a distribution mode of corresponding content, and a condition of
transaction of corresponding content, excluding rights and fee information for the
corresponding content.

3. (original) A method for managing fees of contents according to claim 2, further
comprising the steps of encrypting the contents to be distributed and issuing key information
for decrypting said encrypted contents, said key information being recorded in said recording
medium.

4. **(currently amended)** A method for managing fees of contents in which the fees arise based on a predetermined charging rule upon distributing and utilizing the contents, said method comprising the steps of:

issuing a recording medium to a user operating a user terminal which carries out information processing by utilizing the distributed contents, said recording medium having a data recording area in which user identification data is recorded and a nonvolatile memory area;

equipping information gathering means on a network with which said user terminal with said recording medium being loaded is allowed to connect;

embedding ~~digital information~~ middleware, which gives a predetermined function to the user terminal, to said contents, said ~~digital information~~ middleware ~~itself~~ including one or more programs providing functionality ~~provided~~ to said user terminal to autonomously store monitoring information indicating a distribution history of the contents and a utilizing condition of the contents monitored at the user terminal into said memory area and read said stored monitoring information so as to transmit said monitoring information along with said user identification data to said information gathering means at a predetermined timing while said user terminal is connected with said network;

processing a plurality of said contents, in each of which the ~~digital information~~ middleware is embedded, to one archive data;

selectively encrypting said archive data and adding an attribute data to the encrypted archive data;

distributing said archive data and attribute data through a predetermined distribution mechanism;

holding, by predetermined identification information holding means, identification information for identifying said distributed contents and said distribution mechanism;

counting a distribution condition of the contents per distribution mechanism and a utilizing condition of the contents per user based on said monitoring information and said user identification data gathered through said information gathering means and said identification information held by said identification information holding means; and

determining a charging amount per distribution mechanism based on said counted distribution condition and a charging rule for said contents, and determining a charging amount per user based on said counted utilization condition and a charging rule for said contents,

wherein the utilizing condition of the contents is stored permanently as long as the contents is utilized, and

the attribute data indicates one or more of a genre of corresponding content, a type of corresponding content, a distribution mode of corresponding content, and a condition of transaction of corresponding content, excluding rights and fee information for the corresponding content.

5. (original) A method for managing fees of contents according to claim 4, further comprising the step of encrypting the contents to be distributed and issuing key information for decrypting said encrypted contents, said key information being recorded in said recording medium.

6. **(currently amended)** A system for managing fees of contents in which the fees arise based on a predetermined charging rule upon distributing the contents, said system comprising:

information gathering means provided on a network with which a user terminal is allowed to connect, said user terminal carrying out information processing by utilizing said contents;

distributing means for embedding ~~digital information~~middleware, which gives a predetermined function to the user terminal, to said contents, said ~~digital information~~middleware itself including one or more programs providing functionality ~~provided~~ to said user terminal to autonomously monitor, and store, a contents utilizing history at the user terminal, and transmit the stored contents utilizing history and a contents distributing history to said information gathering means at a predetermined timing while said user terminal is connected with said network, for processing a plurality of said contents, in each of which the ~~digital information~~middleware is embedded, to one archive data, for selectively encrypting said archive data and adding an attribute data to the encrypted archive data, and for distributing said archive data and attribute data through a predetermined distribution mechanism;

identification information holding means for holding identification information for identifying said distributed contents and said distribution mechanism;

counting means for counting a distribution condition of contents per distribution mechanism based on said contents distributing history gathered through said information gathering means and said identification information held by said identification information holding means; and

fee calculating means for determining a charging amount per distribution mechanism based on said counted distribution condition and a charging rule for said contents,

wherein the contents utilizing history is stored permanently as long as the contents is utilized, and

the attribute data indicates one or more of a genre of corresponding content, a type of corresponding content, a distribution mode of corresponding content, and a condition of transaction of corresponding content, excluding rights and fee information for the corresponding content.

7. **(currently amended)** A system for managing fees of contents in which the fees arise based on a predetermined charging rule upon utilizing the contents, said system comprising:

issuing means for issuing a recording medium to a user operating a user terminal which carries out information processing by utilizing said contents, said recording medium having a data recording area in which user identification data is recorded and a nonvolatile memory area;

information gathering means provided on a network with which said user terminal with said recording medium being loaded is allowed to connect;

distributing means for embedding digital information middleware, which gives a predetermined function to the user terminal, to said contents, said ~~digital information middleware~~ itself including one or more programs providing functionality provided to said user terminal to autonomously monitor, and store to said memory area, a contents utilizing history indicating utilizing condition of the contents at the user terminal, and read said stored contents utilizing history so as to transmit said contents utilizing history to said information gathering means along with said user identification data at a predetermined timing while said user terminal is connected with said network, for processing a plurality of said contents, in each of which the ~~digital information middleware~~ is embedded, to one archive data, for selectively encrypting said archive data and adding an attribute data

to the encrypted archive data, and for distributing said archive data and attribute data through a predetermined distribution mechanism;

identification information holding means for holding identification information for identifying said distributed contents;

counting means for counting a utilization condition of the contents per user based on the contents utilizing history and the user identification data gathered through said information gathering means and the identification information held by said identification information holding means; and

fee calculating means for determining a charging amount per user based on said counted utilization condition and a charging rule for said contents,

wherein the contents utilizing history is stored permanently as long as the contents is utilized, and

the attribute data indicates one or more of a genre of corresponding content, a type of corresponding content, a distribution mode of corresponding content, and a condition of transaction of corresponding content, excluding rights and fee information for the corresponding content.

8. (original) A system for managing fees of contents according to claim 7, wherein said recording medium is a card equipped with an IC chip, said card being individualized per user, and information indispensable for utilizing said contents is recorded in said card.

9. – 12. (canceled)